

GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL AND THE ARMY STAFF

A Study in Effective Staff Leadership

by

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Few dispute George Marshall's role in winning World War II. He is universally recognized as one of its most important leaders. For Instance,

** Time magazine selected him as 1943's "Man of the Year." (His role in the Marshall Plan won him a second "Man of the Year" recognition in 1947.)

** Newsweek magazine polled seventy prominent Americans during 1943 to determine which American leaders "made the greatest contribution of leadership to the nation" during the first two years of war? They mentioned George Marshall most often.¹

** In explaining his selection of Eisenhower over Marshall to command the cross-channel invasion, President Roosevelt said, "I didn't feel I could sleep at ease with you out of Washington."²

** He became the nations' first five star general in December 1944.³

** Shortly after the war, Truman praised Marshall by saying, "Millions of Americans gave their country outstanding service. General of the Army George C. Marshall gave it victory."⁴

But General Marshall was not a commander in the field. Unlike Generals Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, and Patton, Marshall was the Army's Chief of Staff--a position normally relegated to historical obscurity. In fact, Roosevelt once asked, "Who remembers who the Chiefs of Staff were during the Civil War or World War I?"⁵

Despite his position as a staff officer, Marshall emerged as the war's most respected general. He and his staff directed military operations around the world. In addition, he was Roosevelt's most trusted military advisor, a strategist on global terms, and a champion of alliance warfare. He was one of the war's most effective leaders.

WHY STUDY MARSHALL?

As with most talented men, we can learn a great deal from George Marshall. His ability to successfully direct the Army Staff during the crucial three month period from December 1941 through March 1942 is particularly instructive. It provides some very good insights on how to lead and direct large staff faced with multiple problems.

During this period, Marshall and his staff successfully tackled a wide range of critical problems that would affect the outcome of the war. These included:

- ** The continuing effort to rapidly expand the Army and to provide for its ever-increasing needs.

- ** The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the resulting investigation into this military disaster.

- ** The continued Japanese invasion in the Pacific including attacks on the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaya, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies.

- ** Germany's declaration of war on the United States.

- ** The Arcadia Conference which set the British and American strategic direction for the War.

- ** The push for a more integrated command structure which resulted in the establishment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This article will look at Marshall's preparation to become Chief of Staff, his ability to build an effective team, the character of the staff, and Marshall's interaction with these very talented men. With this background, I will then investigate how Marshall handled two critical issues: The support to the beleaguered forces in the Philippines and the reorganization of the Army Staff. Lastly, it will offer some insights into why Marshall was so successful as a staff leader. Hopefully, we can apply these traits to our own careers.

MARSHALL'S PREPARATION

By the time George Marshall became the Army's Chief of Staff, he was already considered one of the Army's most thorough and competent officers. He cultivated his reputation through hard work and thoroughness. He also pursued a calculated policy of committing himself only when he knew he was right, and could prove it.⁶

But while he built much of his reputation on his own hard work and natural abilities, he was also fortunate to serve in a series of important staff positions. These assignments exposed him to the Army's most pressing problems. He took the time to study every aspect of these problems. Over the years, he became a recognized expert on issues ranging from small unit tactics to the Army's budget.

Marshall also had the fortune to work for some of the Army's brightest leaders.⁷ Recognizing his talents, they mentored him

and prepared him for more demanding assignments. In turn, he studied their approach to solving problems. From them, he learned about leadership at the highest levels of our government. He also gained a firm understanding of the Army's bureaucracy and its relationship to the American people and the rest of the government.

In short, George Marshall's experience gave him the ability to see the forest and the trees. Fifteen years after the war, Walt Rostow would write that Marshall was "well prepared to serve as Chief of Staff to a strong President; to build quickly a powerful and effective higher military staff, capable of directing a global war; and to work with allies in a setting of Congressional confidence. The men who rose to posts of high responsibility under Marshall reflected his experience and his conception. . . Marshall built a command post through which passed the best staff brains of an Army generation."⁸

MARSHALL BUILDS HIS TEAM.

As Rostow suggested, Marshall moved quickly to form an effective cadre of leaders. Shortly after becoming Chief of Staff, he told a columnist, "The present general officers of the line are for the most part too old to command troops in battle under the terrific pressures of modern war. . . I do not propose to send our young citizens-soldiers into action, if they must go into action, under commanders whose minds are no longer adaptable to the making of split-second decisions in the fast-moving war of

today."⁹

"They'll have their chance to prove what they can do."
Marshall continued, "But I doubt that many of them will come through satisfactorily. Those that don't will be eliminated."¹⁰

Marshall was as good as his word. Of all the senior generals on active duty when he became Chief of Staff, only Walter Krueger would command American troops in battle. The rest retired.¹¹

But where would the new officers come from? Fortunately, Marshall observed many officers over his long career and kept a "black book" on their strengths and weaknesses. He also had an exceptional eye for talent and was usually correct in sizing up officer's potential.¹² As Chief of Staff, Marshall would test them.

"I'm going to put these men to the severest tests which I can devise in time of peace." He told the columnist, "I'm going to start shifting them into jobs of greater responsibility than those they hold now. . . Those who stand up under the punishment will be pushed ahead. Those who fail are out at the first sign of faltering."¹³

Many of these future leaders would pass through Marshall's staff. Among them would be: Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, J. Lawton Collins, Matthew Ridgeway, and Maxwell Taylor.¹⁴ Each of these officers would become successful field commanders and succeed each other as the Army's Chief of Staff. Others that passed through Marshall's staff included: Generals Bedell Smith

(later Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Director of the CIA), Handy, Gerow, and McNarney.

THE CHARACTER OF THE ARMY STAFF.

Marshall picked his staff with care. In many respects, the men Marshall selected were a reflection of his own experiences and values. He was known for his absolute integrity, selfless dedication, almost rigid self-discipline, and complete confidence in his own ideas and actions. Each of these attributes were instilled into his staff.

Demand for Honesty. Marshall's integrity is almost legendary. He told the truth even if it hurt his case, but he invariably won the confidence of others by his own complete integrity and candor.

In a similar manner, Marshall demanded absolute honesty from his subordinates. He did not want "yes-man." For instance, General Bradley was Marshall's secretary during 1940. Marshall told Bradley, "When you carry a paper in here, I want you to give me every reason you can think of why I should not approve it. If in spite of your objections, my decision is still to go ahead, then I'll know that I'm right."¹⁵

General Wedemeyer had a similar experience. After making a strong presentation that criticized Marshall's position, Wedemeyer told Marshall that he hoped he hadn't been disrespectful. Marshall replied, "Wedemeyer, don't you ever fail to give me your unequivocal expression of your views. You would do me a

disservice if you did otherwise."¹⁶

On the other hand, Marshall could be brutal to those who were not completely candid with him. For instance, one young general came to Washington to explain and defend MacArthur's strategic proposals for the war in the Pacific. The general concluded by remarking, "I will stake my military reputation on the soundness of these plans." General Marshall leaned across the table and asked acidly, "Just what is your military reputation?"¹⁷

Selfless Dedication. Marshall consciously declined to promote himself. Such restraint would cost him the assignment he wanted most--the command of the cross-channel invasion. Most historians agreed that if he had pressed President Roosevelt for the command, he would have received that prized assignment. However, such actions would have been totally out of character for Marshall. As a consequence, Marshall remained as Chief of Staff and Eisenhower took the command.¹⁸

Marshall expected the same selfless dedication from others. He did not see the Army Staff as a stepping stone to more prestigious field assignment. On the contrary, he saw these staff assignments as essential to the war effort, but as a dead-end to any military career.

He once told Eisenhower that promotions would go to the officers who did the fighting. "Take your case," Marshall added, "I know that your were recommended by one general for division command and by another for corps command. That's all very well.

I'm glad they have that opinion of you, but you are going to stay right here and fill your position, and that's that!" Marshall continued, "While this may seem a sacrifice to you, that's the way it must be."¹⁹

While Marshall made a concerted effort to send his staff officers to field assignments, he kept them long enough to make significant contributions to the war effort. Their dedication, continuity, and detailed knowledge of the various problems were a key, if often overlooked, contribution to the war effort.

In a similar vein, Marshall particularly disliked officers seeking outside patronage. For instance, one staff officer recalled a phone call that Marshall received in his presence. He didn't know what was said on the other side, but an angry Marshall replied, "Senator, if you are interested in that officer's advancement, the best thing you can do is never mention his name to me again. Good-by."²⁰

Self-Discipline. Marshall looked for officers with self-discipline. After several bouts with neurasthenia (exhaustion due to overwork) during his early career, Marshall disciplined himself to exercise and relax.²¹ He expected other to do the same. (Marshall was true to his beliefs. He exercised each morning, arrived at his office no later than 7:45 each day, and left no later than 5:30 each evening. He went home to relax.²²)

Marshall believed "a man who worked himself to tatters on minor details had no ability to handle the more vital issues of war."²³ He told staff officers, "Avoid trivia."²⁴

Confidence, Optimism and Enthusiasm. Marshall's self-confidence was well known. He also expected staff officers to be confident and enthusiastic about their assignments. He would not assign an officer to any responsible positions unless he was an enthusiastic supporter of the project. He wanted them to be confident of the project's successful outcome.²⁵

MARSHALL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS STAFF.

Marshall demanded exacting staff work. Staff officers quickly learned his standard: They had to be thoroughly prepared. Their recommendations had to be concise, unbiased, detailed and thorough. They also learned that he strongly disliked staff studies and reports.²⁶ He preferred action over reports.

Staff Efficiency. Briefings given to Marshall were models in efficiency and communication of ideas. Staff officers were instructed to walk into his office without saluting and take a seat in front of his desk. At his signal, they began their briefing. Marshall listened with absolute concentration and absorbed the most intricate details. If there was a flaw, he would find it and ask why it hadn't been uncovered before it got to his desk. At the end of the briefing, he would ask, "What is your recommendation?"²⁷

After the briefing, Marshall made his decision. The sheer rapidity of Marshall's thinking left many officers with the initial impression that he was "playing things off the cuff." In

fact, he was "thinking of every detail, but thinking at a fantastic speed, and with unmatched powers of analysis."²⁸ He then stated his decision clearly and with the greatest simplicity. He spoke rapidly, but plainly.

Long Term Outlook and Planning. Marshall also valued effective and pragmatic planning. Historian Richard Neustadt suggests that he had an uncanny ability to look at current problems with a sense of both the past and the future.²⁹ He understood history and could relate future consequences to current actions. In addition, he wanted to act on problems, not react to them. He repeatedly told his staff, "Gentlemen, don't fight the problem. Solve it."³⁰

He also forced his staff to think about problems that might have seemed remote at the time. For instance, only several months after the disastrous American defeats in the Pacific and at Kasserine Pass, Marshall called Major General John Hilldring to his office. He told Hilldring to start organizing the military governments for the countries that were going to be liberated by the Allies.³¹ Amid all the bad news, Marshall knew the Allies would be victorious. He wanted to be prepared when that victory came.

Delegation and Staff Initiative. Once he accepted a plan, Marshall expected his staff to act decisively within their authority. He also insisted that his subordinates do their assigned jobs with a minimum of supervision and make decisions without waiting to be told. He didn't want to waste his time

with decisions that could have been made at a lower level.³²

Toward this end, he supported his staff by giving them wide latitude to accomplish their jobs. Furthermore, he backed their actions with the full authority of his position. General Eisenhower later wrote, "His ability to delegate authority not only expedited work but impelled every subordinate to perform beyond his suspected capacity."³³

Teacher-Student Relationship. Marshall acted as a teacher and role model to his staff. He used every opportunity to coach his subordinates. He often used historical examples, particularly the campaigns of Stonewall Jackson, to illustrate his arguments³⁴

Eisenhower's biographer suggested Marshall's office "became kind of a schoolroom in which Eisenhower learned many lessons useful to him in the final development of his own command technique."³⁵

Among the more important lessons Eisenhower learned was how to successfully meld political and military leadership at the highest levels. He saw that "Marshall never condescended, never presumed to issue 'orders' to civilians, and never impugned the motives of his opponents on specific issues. He made no grandiose public gestures calculated to inflame the prejudices or outrage the convictions of those who instinctively distrust the military. He counted on the truth--frankly stated, persuasively argued--to win its own points, and when he secured the agreement of a former opponent on an issue he never gloated over it. In

his view, such a 'victory' was never personal; it meant simply that his former opponent, like himself, now recognized an objective reality."³⁶ Eisenhower learned these lesson and applied them exceptionally well as the Supreme Commander in Europe.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

"If George Marshall had a fault," Maxwell Taylor wrote, "it was that his strong personality had such an unnerving effect on officers around him." Taylor recalled, "I have seen many a general officer in his outer office betraying a most unmilitary agitation while awaiting his turn to pass through the door to his (Marshall's) office."³⁷

Many remember Marshall's thoughtfulness and considerate actions, but few would remember him as a warm friend. Omar Bradley wrote, "Although I had known General Marshall for more than ten years, I was never entirely comfortable in his presence."³⁸

General Wedemeyer, Marshall's chief planner for several years, wrote, "In all my contacts with Marshall, I found him as a rule coolly impersonal, with little humor. I know of many acts of kindness and thoughtfulness on his part, but he kept everyone at arm's length. It was typical of him that no one I know, with the exception of General Stilwell, ever called him by his Christian name or was on terms of even the beginnings of familiarity."³⁹ (As an interesting side note, President

Roosevelt once called Marshall by his first name, George. He got a stand-off look from Marshall and never called him by his Christian name again.)

General Eisenhower summed up both sides of Marshall's personal relations with his subordinates. On one side, he noted "an atmosphere of friendly co-operation, remarkably free of even minor irritations, surrounded him. Yet he gained this co-operation without sacrificing one iota of his effective leadership; there was never any question among his subordinates as to who was the boss. He commanded respect, without insisting upon it, by his integrity, his profound knowledge of the job, and his obvious commitment to forces greater than himself."⁴⁰

On the other hand, Eisenhower noted that just about everyone on Eisenhower's staff was in awe of Marshall. He related the story of Brigadier General Robert Crawford. Eisenhower suggested, Crawford was "a brilliant man with an unlimited future," but Marshall terrified him. Crawford got tongue-tied every time he was in Marshall's presence. As a consequence, Crawford's talents were never fully recognized.⁴¹

General Walter B. Smith agreed with Eisenhower. He believed some officers failed because they were incapable of expressing themselves lucidly and succinctly.⁴² During 1942, Smith suggested, "Those who speak slowly and haltingly and seem to fumble are soon passed by in the rush to get things done."⁴³

Despite his intimidating reputation, there was another side to Marshall. He obviously cared about his subordinates. In

addition, he was unfailingly courteous and thoughtful. Although he would occasionally get impatient and sometimes sharp with his subordinates, he was never rude. Marshall was the model of a gentleman in his dealings with all around him.

Moreover, many of his subordinate noted his uncommon thoughtfulness. General Lucian Truscott suggested that Marshall's generous and thoughtful actions "always distinguished him in his dealings with his subordinates."⁴⁴

In a similar vein, General Mark Clark's wife wrote that Marshall "was a great comfort to the wives and families of the officers he knew personally. Despite the terrible burden of responsibility and his work as Chief of Staff. . . he always tried to find time to pass along word of the officers to their families. He made me and many other wives feel that our Army had a heart and soul and that our husbands were something more than mere numbers dropped into the slot for which their training fit them."⁴⁵

In addition, Marshall often remained in the background while his subordinates received the credit for their hard work. For instance, it was Marshall who "prepared the ground for Eisenhower's tumultuous reception in New York, the ovations of Spaatz and Bradley in Philadelphia, of Hodges in Atlanta and Devers in Louisville."⁴⁶ Marshall never accepted such honors for himself. (In fact, he seemed genuinely embarrassed by them.)

It's difficult to understand why Marshall was so outwardly

cool to his subordinates. Some suggest that it was the mechanism he used to protect himself. He once told his wife, "I cannot afford the luxury of sentiment. Mine must be cold logic. Sentiment is for others. . . It is not easy for me to tell men where they have failed. . . My days seem to be filled with situations and problems where I must do the difficult, the hard thing."⁴⁷ In any event, his coolness did not hurt the overall operation of the staff. While some were obviously hurt, others flourished.

THE ARMY STAFF IN ACTION

Two staff actions initiated by Marshall show how he effectively used his staff to achieve results. The first is Marshall's response to the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. The second is the reorganization of the Army Staff. Both took place between December 1941 and March 1942.

Marshall's Reacts to the Invasion of the Philippines.

Five days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Third Army's Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Dwight Eisenhower, received a call from the War Department. General Marshall wanted him to come to Washington right away. Eisenhower did not know why. He immediately took the train to Washington.

Eisenhower arrived at Union Station in Washington on Sunday morning, 14 December, and went straight to General Marshall's office. Marshall quickly outlined the situation in the Pacific.

He discussed the ships lost at Pearl Harbor, the planes lost at Clark Field in the Philippines, the size and strength of Japanese attacks elsewhere. Next he discussed the troop strengths in the Philippines, the limited possibilities of reinforcement, and the intelligence estimates. He ended with the capabilities of the Dutch and British in Asia, and other details.⁴⁸

Marshall paused. Then he leaned over the desk, fixed his eyes on Eisenhower, and demanded, "What should be our general line of action?"⁴⁹

Eisenhower was startled. Other than Marshall's briefing, all he knew about the Pacific war was what he had read in the papers. After a second or two of hesitation, he replied, "Give me a few hours." Marshall agreed.⁵⁰

Marshall's actions were typical. He recruited the best officers to be on his staff. Eisenhower met this criteria--he already had an exceptional reputation as a staff officer. Marshall also wanted his staff officers to think clearly and act on their own. His question was Eisenhower's first test.⁵¹

Eisenhower returned later that day. He suggested that it was impossible to get reinforcements to save the Philippines, but the United States had to bolster MacArthur's forces. "The people of China, of the Philippines, of the Dutch East Indies will be watching us.", he said "They may excuse failure but they will not excuse abandonment."⁵²

Eisenhower further recommended that the United States use Australia as a base of operations. Lastly, he recommended the

United States set up a line of communications running from Hawaii through New Zealand to Australia.⁵³

When he finished his brief, Eisenhower recalled that Marshall leaned forward with "an eye that seemed awfully cold-- and declared, 'Eisenhower, the Department is filled with able men who analyze the problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done.'"⁵⁴

Over the next several months, Eisenhower devoted most of his energies and took wide ranging responsibilities to make his recommendations work. Marshall liked Eisenhower's ability to turn ideas into actions and he increased Eisenhower's responsibilities accordingly. On 9 March 1942, he was named to head the newly formed Chief of the Operations Division.

Marshall's actions were typical. He gave his trusted subordinates full reign to accomplish a mission and rarely interfered with their ability to do it. After his initial interview with Marshall, Eisenhower rarely met with Marshall again. Marshall trusted Eisenhower's judgement and backed his actions. In return, Marshall received selfless and dedicated service from his subordinates.

The Reorganization of the Army Staff

Even before becoming Chief of Staff, Marshall realized the Army's General Staff was incapable of preparing for war. He

later said the staff had "lost track of its purpose or existence. It had become a huge, bureaucratic, red-tape-ridden operating agency. It slowed everything down."⁵⁵

In addition, Marshall had over sixty officers with direct access to him. He also had thirty major and 350 minor commands under him.⁵⁶ Clearly, this span of control was too large. The need for reform was recognized for a long time, but the bureaucracy always moved to block any changes.

Marshall wanted to reorganize the War Department, but he realized his efforts would be blocked if he gave its opponents time to organize. To get the changes he needed, he had to rely on careful planning, minimum publicity, and complete ruthlessness in execution.

Within a month of Pearl Harbor, Marshall chose General McNarney to lead the effort in reorganizing the staff. McNarney's chief qualifications were that he had recent experience on the Army Staff, understood the army and air forces, and had just returned from England. Most important, Marshall needed a "tough hatchetman with a rhinoceros hide." Lastly, McNarney had "the nerve to push through the reorganization in the face of the rugged infighting that was almost certain to follow."⁵⁷

McNarney started on January 25, 1942. Within a week, McNarney and several assistants completed the plan. It was sweeping.

**** The General Headquarters and the War Plans Division were eliminated and replaced by the new Operations Division.**

**** The G-1, G-3, and G-4 with combined staffs of 304**

officers were reduced to twelve officers each and restricted to planning functions.

** The powerful Chiefs of Arms were eliminated.

** Finally, the numerous agencies and commands were consolidated into three larger organizations: The Ground Forces under General McNair, the Army Air Forces under General Arnold, and the Services of Supply under General Somervell.

Marshall approved the plan on February 5, 1942.

The plan hit the War Department like a bombshell, but Marshall's careful timing of the action had already won most of the battle. He had timed the changes to coincide with the transfer of two Chiefs of Arms and the Adjutant General. The remaining two Chiefs of Arms were destined for more important duties and were soon transferred. Thus, careful timing had eliminated one of the biggest obstacles to the plan.

Next, Marshall asked President Roosevelt to approve the plan under the President's recently granted war powers. When Roosevelt approved the plan on February 28, it allowed Marshall to bypass the Congressional patronage of some of Marshall's subordinates. Marshall and McNarney had successfully neutralized most of the expected outside interference.

The first phase of the battle was over. Now, Marshall and McNarney had to prevent the staff from sabotaging the plan. Once again, they moved quickly. Marshall set up a committee to carry out the plan, but gave its members little room to tinker or object. The plan went into effect on March 9.

Within six weeks of receiving his orders, General McNarney had completed his mission. Marshall's biographer, Forrest Pogue,

credits the lightening swift success of the reorganization to "the audacity of his (McNarney's) approach and the full authority of the Chief of Staff."⁵⁹ Once again, Marshall picked the right man for the job and gave him full authority to get it done. Marshall also showed a complete understanding of the Army and the workings of the government.

Lastly, it shows his ability to relate consequences to actions. Pogue believed that it was "the most sweeping reorganization of the War Department since Secretary of War Elihu Root had undertaken the job in 1903."⁶⁰ It provided a smaller, more efficient staff and cut paperwork to a minimum. In addition, it set up clear lines of authority. Lastly, it freed Marshall from the details of training and supply. Marshall delegated responsibility to others while he freed himself to concentrate on the war's strategy and major operations abroad.⁶¹

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM MARSHALL?

General Marshall's staff leadership offers some valuable lessons. He handled his staff with absolute efficiency and got more from them than they expected they could give.

What made Marshall such a successful staff leader? As important, what can we learn from his leadership and how can we apply it today?

At least five aspects of Marshall's staff leadership deserve special attention. In each case, adapting Marshall's techniques can help us make better decisions and become more efficient as a

staff leader.

Using the Staff as a Counterpoint. Marshall was an exceptionally knowledgeable Chief of Staff. Throughout his career, he aggressively sought to learn every aspect and detail of his profession. Due to his own hard work, a diversity of demanding assignments, and effective mentorship by others, Marshall became an expert in many areas. As Chief of Staff, he thoroughly knew the Army's strengths and limitations from the squad up.

With such depth and breath of knowledge about the Army, some staff leaders might be tempted to ignore or discard the advice of their staffs. Other staff leaders might limit their staff to the execution of their preconceived ideas. Still others might view their staff as an impediment to their ideas. Marshall rejected these approaches.

Marshall relied heavily on his staff, but not in an information gathering role. Rather, he used them as a sounding board. They broadened his already extensive knowledge of the Army by giving Marshall new perspectives on problems that he had already considered. As the anecdotes about Bradley and Wedemeyer suggest, Marshall used his staff to confirm or modify his line of attack on a problem. (He also saved himself a great deal of time and trouble, but more on this later.)

As a consequence of such an approach, Marshall consistently produced well thought-out and sound recommendations. Roosevelt rarely rejected Marshall's recommendations.

Staff Leadership. Marshall insisted "that leadership in conference, even with subordinates, is as important as on the battlefield."⁶² Indeed, Marshall had many of the leadership traits emphasized by today's management and leadership consultants. Four are worth strong consideration.

Vision. Marshall had a clear and unshakable vision of what the Army Staff should be. Within this vision, he transformed the Army Staff from a bickering bureaucratic agency to a lean organization capable of planning and directing worldwide military operations.

Standards. Marshall not only set high standards, he enforced them. He was ruthless in replacing those who did not measure up to the standards. As important, he applied his standards equally to everyone.

Communication and Motivation. He clearly articulated and communicated his visions, standards and ideas. When he spoke, he motivated.

Decisiveness. Marshall was decisive, but not impulsive. When action had to be taken, he took it. But, he invariably sized up the problem, developed a sound plan, and took quick, well-synchronized action. His reorganization of the Army Staff is an example of such decisive action over much opposition.

Marshall's sound leadership methods offered several benefits.

First, the Army Staff gained a sense of direction. Marshall's ability to formulate and communicate his vision

allowed everyone to visualize the Department's long-range goals. Each officer saw how their contributions, however small, helped the Department's overall effort.

Second, the staff became very efficient. Clear guidance and a firm sense of direction minimized the effort spent on redoing actions that had been mistakenly embarked upon with the wrong guidance. The time saved was used to solve other important problems.

Third, Marshall's high standards permeated everything the staff did. As a result, the staff consistently produced exceptionally good work.

Total Staff Involvement. In today's parlance, Marshall gave "mission orders." He made his subordinates fully responsible for actions.

Marshall's procedures were simple. First, he defined the task and his expectations to his subordinate. Next, he ordered the officer to develop a plan. After Marshall approved the plan, he directed the staff officer to execute the plan. Marshall monitored progress throughout the process, but he did not expect the staff officer to pester him for more details or guidance. He expected his staff to make timely decisions within the realm of their authority.

The broad responsibilities given to Eisenhower after Pearl Harbor were the rule on Marshall's staff, not the exception. Marshall's approach had several advantages.

First, it freed Marshall to concentrate on the most

important decisions. He also gained more time to contemplate the future and the "big picture."

Second, it minimized actions "falling through the crack." There was continuity on staff actions. Few actions were dropped during staff handoffs simply because there were few staff handoffs.

Third, his "start to finish" approach allowed staff officers to move quickly up the learning curve and stay there. Staff officers became the experts in their particular areas of responsibility. Combined with Marshall's desire for staff officers to make decisions, this approach allowed the most knowledgeable person to make the decisions affecting the action. It also minimized "reinventing the wheel."

Fourth, staff officers felt responsible for their actions. They aggressively sought to bring their actions to successful conclusions. (Remember, Marshall only picked officers who were confident in the outcome of the actions they were undertaking.)

Fifth, this process was part of Marshall's mentoring and development process. By making his staff officers take responsibility, he prepared them for more responsible positions in the future. Thus, he fulfilled one of the fundamental responsibilities of any leader; he trained his subordinates for positions of greater responsibility and leadership.

Developing Talent. Marshall had an extraordinary ability to choose and develop talented officers. He identified them early in their careers, moved them into responsible assignments, and

mentored them along the way. However, he avoided cronyism. He carefully "tested" each officer before moving him into more responsible positions. Officers were advanced on their contributions and potential, not their friendship.

Marshall normally developed his subordinates by giving them responsibility, not by lecturing them. In addition, Marshall acted as a role model for many of his subordinates. Certainly, Eisenhower's references to "Marshall's classroom" indicated the kind of relationship he had with Marshall as a mentor.

Marshall's ability to develop talent had several benefits.

First, Marshall insured that the best officers rose to the top. There was no cronyism on the Army Staff as there were in some of the field commands

Second, talent fostered talent. The Army Staff had a great deal of talent. The very interaction of such talented men promoted an atmosphere of excitement and creativity among its members. Such creativity was reinforced and rewarded by Marshall.

Third, Marshall's impartial manner of promoting talent fostered trust throughout his staff. Members of his staff knew they would be rewarded on their performance, not their connections.

Fourth, Marshall invariably placed the right person in the right job. Marshall's continual observations and "testing" of his subordinates gave him an excellent picture of their strengths, weaknesses, and potentials.

Staff Efficiency. Marshall sought efficiency in everything that he did. He also insisted that his staff be efficient. His disdain for staff papers, insistence on no-frill briefing techniques, drive for bottom line recommendations, and his almost adherence to a tight daily schedule clearly point to his desire for disciplined efficiency.

On a broader scale, his radical reorganization (not just minor fixes) of the War Department demonstrated his impatience with bureaucratic delays to action. (He conclusively showed that "bigger" is not necessarily better when it comes to a bureaucracy. He also required that his staff could do "more with less.") Under his leadership, the War Department became a remarkably well-tuned machine capable of planning and executing the nation's military strategy.

Such an aggressive approach to efficiency had several important advantages.

First, it emphasized action. The Army Staff faced an avalanche of problems before and during World War II. They could have easily been overwhelmed. But, it was not a time for important actions to languish. Marshall's approach quickly moved urgent actions through the bureaucracy in Washington.

Second, Marshall and his staff saved time and effort. In turn, this allowed Marshall more time for sensitive issues, planning, and reflection. In addition, it allowed him to relax-- a precious commodity for a man in his position. (Remember, Marshall religiously left the office each day at 5:30 in the

evening and went home to relax.)

SOME LAST THOUGHTS

This article provides an historical perspective on practical techniques for leading a large and very effective staff. It doesn't imply that Marshall's style is the only way of running a staff. Rather, it suggests the importance of Marshall's drive for action and integrity, for making clear and timely decisions, and for developing talent. These are essential to any organization.

Quality leadership by staff leaders is important. For instance, when Field Marshall Sir Bernard L. Montgomery was asked to list the attributes of a successful general, the first item on his list was "Have a good Chief of Staff."⁶³ Staff leaders leave their imprint not only on their staff, but on the entire organization. Their importance cannot be overrated. They can make the difference, but to do so they must conscientiously study their profession as General George C. Marshall studied all aspects of the Army throughout his career.

NOTES

1. "We Tested Our Leaders: These Are the Ten Rated Topmost by a Panel of Authorities," Newsweek, December 6, 1943, pp. 30-32. The top ten (with the number of citations) were: Marshall (66), Roosevelt (65), Hull (48), Willkie (47), Eisenhower (41), Baruch (38), Kaiser (35), MacArthur (28), Nelson (27), and King (23). (The tabulation of the poll is somewhat misleading since it accounted only for votes cast. Actually, President Roosevelt received 56 first place and five second place votes. Marshall received nine first place and 24 second place votes. If the votes had been weighted, President Roosevelt would have come in first place and Marshall in second place.)
2. Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), pp. 802-3.
3. The other five star generals, in order of rank, were: Generals MacArthur, Eisenhower, and Arnold. All were promoted during December 1944, but with different dates of rank. General Bradley was promoted on 18 September 1950.
4. Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Statesman (New York: Viking, 1987), p. 1.
5. Generals Scott, Bliss, Biddle and (Peyton C.) March were the Army's Chiefs of Staff during World War I. There was no position as Chief of Staff during the Civil War; however, General Halleck became Lincoln's military advisor.
6. William Frye, Marshall: Citizen Soldier (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), p. 259.
7. General Pershing was Marshall's most important mentor; however, he had many others. Among his other military mentors were Generals Hunter-Liggett, Bell, and Fox Connor. Connor is among the more interesting. Generals Patton and Eisenhower also claimed that Connor was their mentor. As President, Eisenhower would say, "Fox Connor was the ablest man I ever knew."
8. W. W. Rostow, The United States in the World Arena (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 49.
9. Eric Larrabee, Commander in Chief (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987), p. 101.

10. Ibid., p. 101.

11. Ibid., p. 101.

12. The advancement of many officers during World War II was directly related to a favorable relationship with Marshall during an earlier part of their careers. For instance, 160 officers who served with him at Fort Benning became general officers during the war (Puryear, p. 69.). On the other hand, there is at least one horror story about Marshall's black book. For years, Marshall confused General James Van Fleet with another officer who had the reputation of being a poor soldier and a drunk. Each time Van Fleet was recommended for promotion to Brigadier General, Marshall rejected it. Finally, someone pointed out Marshall's error and Van Fleet was promoted. He eventually became a four star general and a distinguished Army commander in Korea (Mosley, p. 414).

13. Larrabee, pp. 101-102.

14. Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945 (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 62.

15. Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1951), p. 20.

16. General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Wedemeyer Reports! (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1958), p. 187.

17. Marshall Sanger, The Image of Modern Generalship in the United States, 1940 - 1965 (Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, 1967), p. 292.

18. Ibid., p. 321.

19. Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 143.

20. Marshall S. Carter, "Unforgettable George C. Marshall," A Reader's Digest Reprint (Pleasantville, N.Y., July 1972), p. 4.

21. Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Education of a General (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 124-126.

22. Leonard Mosley, Marshall: Hero for Our Times (New York: Hearst Books, 1982.), p.272.

23. Dwight D Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1948), p. 51.

24. George F. Kennan, Memoirs, 1925-1950 (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1967), p. 326.

25. Eisenhower, p. 51.
26. Frye, p. 271.
27. Carter, p. 1.
28. Frye, p. 270.
29. Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 249.
30. Neustadt, p. 85.
31. Ibid., pp. 247-248.
32. Mosley, p. 269.
33. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 56. Eisenhower would further state, "True delegation implies the courage and readiness to back up a subordinate to the full; it is not to be confused with the slovenly practice of merely ignoring an unpleasant situation in the hope that someone else will handle it. The men who operate thus are not only incompetent but are always quick to blame and punish the poor subordinated who, while attempting to do both his own and his commander's jobs, has taken some action that produces an unfortunate result.
34. Kenneth S. Davis, Soldier of Democracy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1946), p. 294.
35. Ibid., 294.
36. Ibid., p.294.
37. Maxwell D. Taylor, Swords and Plowshares (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), p. 40.
38. Bradley, p. 20.
39. Wedemeyer, p. 121-122.
40. Davis, p. 294.
41. Stephen E. Ambrose, p. 136.
42. Edgar F. Puryear, Nineteen Stars (Orange, Virginia: Green Publishers, 1971), p. 82.
43. Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 277.

44. Lucian K. Truscott, Command Missions (New York: Dutton, 1954), p. 383.
45. Maurine Clark, Captain's Bride, General's Lady: The Memoirs of Mrs. Mark W. Clark (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956) p. 107.
46. Robert Payne, The Marshall Story (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), p. 241.
47. Katherine Tupper Marshall, Together: Annals of an Army Wife (New York and Atlanta: Tupper and Love, 1946), p. 110.
48. Ambrose, p. 133.
49. Ibid., p. 133.
50. Ibid., p. 133.
51. Ibid., p. 133.
52. Ibid., p. 134.
53. Ibid., p. 134.
54. Ibid., p. 134.
55. Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939 - 1942 (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 289.
56. Ibid., p. 290.
57. Ibid., p.292.
58. Ibid., p. 296.
59. Ibid., p. 295.
60. Ibid., p. 295.
61. Ibid., p. 298.
62. Puryear, p. 44.
63. Major H. A. DeWeerd, Great Soldiers of World War II (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1944), p. 117. The list of nine were:
1. Have a good chief of staff;
 2. Go for simplicity in everything;
 3. Cut out all paper and train subordinates to work on verbal instructions and orders;
 4. Keep a firm grip on basic fundamentals--the things that

really matter;

5. Avoid being involved in details--leave them to your staff;

6. Study morale--it is a big thing in war. Without high morale you can achieve nothing;

7. When the issue hangs in the balance, express confidence in the plans and in the operations, even if inwardly you feel not too certain of the outcome;

8. Never worry;

9. Never bellyache.

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